

## Introduction

This report describes the existing condition of the scenic resources for the project area and its surroundings, and the anticipated effects of the proposed alternatives described under the Homestead project. The project area is located on the St. Joe Ranger District of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF) in Shoshone County, Idaho. It lies south of the St. Joe River, east of Marble Creek.

Portions of the project area are visible in varying distances from the Forest Road 321, Forest Trail 251, Forest Trail 261, and Forest Trail 275, as well as recreation sites and other forest roads and trails in the surrounding area. People use the area for a variety of activities, which in turn enhance visitors' quality of life and contribute to the area's sense of place.

Terminology used in this report is defined in Agriculture Handbook No. 701, *Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management*. See this handbook for more information regarding scenery management.

This report is based on the draft Chapter 1 and 2 document received on 11.6.2019, and the Proposed Action map received on 11.12.2019.

## Affected Environment

Marble Creek and the Marble Creek Road run along the western boundary of the Homestead project area. Marble Creek and its drainages were the site of mining operations during the 1800s, and the Marble Creek Road offers access to the creek as well as several recreation sites and campgrounds. The surrounding forests are frequented by big game hunters and OHV enthusiasts. Roads in the project area offer motorized access to forest visitors.

This section of the report describes the affected environment of the project area, and includes descriptions of the area's landscape character, scenic attractiveness, landscape visibility, and existing scenic integrity.

### *Landscape Character*

*Landscape Character* is defined as “an overall visual and cultural impression of landscape attributes – the physical appearance and cultural context of a landscape that gives it an identity and ‘sense of place’” (Landscape Aesthetics, pp. 1-2).

The landscape character of the area is partially described in the St. Joe Geographic Area (GA) section of the 2015 IPNF Forest Plan:

*The St. Joe GA lies predominantly within Benewah and Shoshone Counties in Idaho, with small portions in Kootenai, Latah, and Clearwater counties. Of the 1,449,000 acres within this GA, 724,810 (50 percent) are administered by the IPNF.*

*The St. Joe GA stretches westward from the rugged Idaho/Montana border along the Bitterroot Mountains to the rolling Palouse flatlands along the Idaho/Washington border. The St. Joe Mountains are the northern limit of the GA, while the Clearwater Mountain Range is the southern limit. The St. Joe GA has some of the most productive and biologically diverse forest lands in the Columbia River Basin. The St. Joe GA contains plants and animals of the central Rocky Mountains, the boreal forests, and the moist coastal forests. The St. Joe River basin, headwaters of the Little North Fork of the Clearwater River basin, and the St. Maries River basin are the dominant watersheds within this GA (Forest Plan, p. 96).*

More specifically, the project area is composed of very steep mountainous terrain typical of the Columbia Rockies region and within the St. Joe GA. The project area is located approximately 10 miles south of the St. Joe River, known for its crystal clear waters and views into deep canyons, gorges, and valleys with vertical or near vertical rock walls.

Elevation ranges from approximately 3,000 feet to over 6,500 feet above sea level. Marble Mountain is one of the higher points in the project area, extending approximately 6,400 feet above sea level. Camelback

Mountain, also located within the project boundary extends nearly 6,500 feet above sea level. Significant drainages include Homestead Creek and DaVeggio Creek.

Forest vegetation is generally continuous, evenly textured forest cover within the project area and includes the subalpine and warm/moist biophysical settings making up 58 percent and 40 percent of the project area respectively with minor amounts of the warm/dry biophysical setting (See Vegetation Report). Forest vegetation in the warm/moist biophysical setting is dominated by the grand fir/cedar/mountain hemlock dominance group. There is little representation of early seral, shade-intolerant, drought- and fire-tolerant, insect/disease resistant species dominance types (e.g. western larch, western white pine, and whitebark pine). Forest vegetation in the subalpine biophysical setting is dominated by subalpine fir, mountain hemlock, and Engelmann spruce (See Vegetation Report). These settings are relatively homogenous, with a low amount of diversity in size classes and species composition. The forest vegetation has changed over time from stands dominated by western white pine and western larch due to a combination of white pine blister rust introduction, fire suppression, and past management practices. Presently, the project area is made of generally dense coniferous cover primarily comprised of mature forests dominated by Douglas-fir, grand fir, and western hemlock; late-seral species that are disease-prone and drought-intolerant.

Evidence indicates humans have been present in the larger landscape of the St. Joe River basin for at least 5,000 years (*Integration of Forest Planning into Ecosystem Management*, 1997, p. 73). Activities of humans have affected the vegetation, wildlife, recreation activities, and economic conditions of the landscape. Today, people use the area to engage in a variety of pursuits that include hunting and fishing, camping (both developed and dispersed site camping), hiking, firewood gathering, and driving for pleasure (full-sized vehicles, motorcycles, and OHVs). In addition, timber removal on private land has affected the setting and scenic integrity of the project area.

## *Scenic Attractiveness*

*Scenic Attractiveness* is the “primary indicator of the intrinsic scenic beauty of a landscape and of the positive responses it evokes in people. It helps determine landscapes that are important for scenic beauty, based on commonly held perceptions of the beauty of landform, vegetation pattern, composition, surface water characteristics, and land use patterns and cultural features” (Agriculture Handbook No. 701, pp. 1-14).

Scenic Attractiveness is defined as Class A (Distinctive), Class B (Typical), or Class C (Indistinctive). Class A includes areas where landform, vegetation patterns, water characteristics, and cultural features combine to provide unusual, unique, or outstanding scenic quality *within the landscape character*. Class B (Typical) contains areas in which the natural and cultural features combine to create ordinary or common scenic quality, and Class C (Indistinctive) contains those areas where natural and cultural features (or the lack thereof) combine to provide low scenic quality. It is important to note that the frame of reference for scenic attractiveness is the landscape character description (Agriculture Handbook No. 701, pp. 1-16).

In the vicinity of Thierault Lake and in the southeast portion of the project area, the Scenic Attractiveness is rated as Class A (Distinctive), with its combination of water, landform, and rock features coinciding to result in that unique scene. The upper areas of the project area (i.e., located away from the river) are rated as Class B (Typical) for its uniform, closed-canopy forest, broken only occasionally by small parks with few larger trees. A minor amount of Class C (Indistinctive) occurs in the northeast portion of the project area.

## *Landscape Visibility*

*Landscape Visibility* addresses “the relative importance and sensitivity of what is seen and perceived in the landscape” (USDA Forest Service 1995). Landscape visibility is affected by a number of factors including: context of viewers, duration of view, degree of discernable detail, and number of viewers (USDA Forest Service 1995: 4-2). In general, the greater the number of people likely to view a landscape, and the longer the duration, the more sensitive the landscape is to modification. The proximity of the viewer to the particular landscape affects the visibility and sensitivity. Viewing distances for this analysis are: immediate foreground (0 feet to 300 feet); foreground (300 feet to ½ mile); middleground (½ mile to 4 miles); and background (> 4 miles). Of particular concern are travelways, such as primary highways and trails, as well

as primary use areas such as campgrounds. The project area is visible from both Concern Level (CL) 1 and 2 viewing platforms that were identified during forest planning (*IPNF Implementation Guide for Scenery Management [DRAFT]*); several of these were visited to assess visibility of proposed activities from these locations.

The following table identifies the CL 1, 2, and 3 viewing platforms germane to the project.

**Table 1: Concern Levels for the Halfway Malin Project Area**

	Points of Interest	Routes/Roads	Trails	Rivers/Lakes
<b>Concern Level 1</b>	Camp 3 Campground	Forest Road 321 (Marble Creek Road)	Marble Creek Trail #261	Thierault Lake
	Hobo Cedar Grove		Gold Connector Marble Creek Trail #251	
	Hobo Creek Splash Dam		Marble Divide – Grandfather National Recreation Trail #275	
	Hobo Creek Historic Trail #254		Lookout Mountain Trail #52	
	Donkey Creek Campground		Hobo Cedar Grove Big Loop #256	
			Lines Creek Trail #246	
<b>Concern Level 2</b>	None	None	Cornwall Creek Trail #262	None
<b>Concern Level 3</b>	None	None	None	None

### *Existing Scenic Integrity*

*Scenic Integrity*, as defined by the Scenery Management System (SMS), indicates “the degree of intactness and wholeness of the landscape character ... Landscape character with a high degree of integrity has a sense of wholeness, intactness, or being complete” (USDA Forest Service 1995). Scenic integrity is stated in degree of deviation from the landscape character as follows:

- Very High: Landscape is intact with changes resulting primarily through natural processes and disturbance regimes.
- High: Management activities are unnoticed and the landscape character appears unaltered.
- Moderate: Management activities are noticeable but are subordinate to the landscape character. The landscape appears slightly altered.
- Low: Management activities are evident and sometimes dominate the landscape but are designed to blend with surroundings by repeating line, form, color, and texture of valued landscape character attributes. The landscape appears altered. (Forest Plan, p. 124)

The project area has been affected by human activities and the impacts resulting from some of those activities are visible on the landscape. Activities having the greatest impact on scenic resources include wildfire, fire suppression, road construction, timber harvest (and associated slash treatments), slash treatments, prescribed burning, tree planting, precommercial thinning, and developed and dispersed

recreation sites. Of these, fire suppression, road construction, and timber harvest have had the greatest impact on scenery.

The effects of past timber harvest within the project area are visible primarily from points south of the project area in the middleground and background viewing distances, including the CL 1 viewing platforms such as the Marble Creek Road #321, and Forest Trails 251, 261, and 275. These effects include color and texture contrasts associated with ground disturbance and groundcover and tree regeneration. Roads (including cut/fill slopes) associated with harvest activities are similarly visible, and can result in strong contrasts due to their linear nature; however, some of these effects are reduced by early regeneration and brush depending on viewing distance and viewer position.

The effects of past timber harvest on private land adjacent to and/or near the project area are visible from the Marble Creek Road due to their large size, and line and texture contrasts resulting from the geometric shapes, and line and color contrasts resulting from road construction.

Over the last century, a combination of disease and fire suppression has impacted the vegetation, and consequently resulted in effects to scenic resources within the project area. As described in the vegetation report, the combination of blister rust (and subsequent insect and disease attacks and timber harvest) and fire suppression, have changed forest development across this landscape. The lack of early-seral species and the existing “homogenization and simplification of the landscape” (See Forest Plan EIS) has resulted in the “homogenization and simplification” of the scenery. This is expressed by the lack of variety in texture, color, and form when compared to the scenery associated with the historic range of variation, and with the desired condition outlined in the forest plan. In addition, many of the stands are composed of dense stems that preclude visual penetration into the stand in the immediate foreground and foreground viewing distances.

From the identified CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms, the project area would meet scenic integrity level (SIL) ranging from Low to Moderate, due to the visible deviations being dominant to remaining subordinate to the existing landscape character. In spite of this current visual condition, however, the landscape is continuing to move away from the desired condition for both vegetation and scenery as described in the FP.

## *Management Direction*

National law and policy provide direction for scenery management on public land as it applies to natural resource management. In addition, the Forest Service Manual (FSM) includes direction in regard to scenery management. The Idaho Panhandle National Forests 2015 Forest Plan (FP) provides forest-specific management direction. This direction is summarized below.

The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) sets forth a national policy for the environment that provides for the enhancement of environmental quality. It states that it is the “continuing responsibility of the federal government to use all practicable means to assure for all Americans, aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.” The Act directs agencies to develop practicable methodologies for scenery management of “aesthetically and culturally pleasing surrounding.” It also requires a “systematic and interdisciplinary approach which will insure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts into planning and decision-making which may have an impact on man’s environment.”

FSM Section 2380 requires the agency to “inventory, evaluate, manage, and where necessary, restore scenery as a fully integrated part of the ecosystems of the National Forest System lands through the land and resource management and planning process. Scenery must be treated equally with other resources.” It also includes direction to utilize the Scenery Management System as described in Agriculture Handbook No. 701.

The Scenery Management System (SMS) as described in Agriculture Handbook No. 701, *Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management*, was adopted by the IPNF with the FP. In regard to this project, SMS differs in its approach from the Visual Management System (VMS) developed in the 1970s in that it recognizes the potentially positive visual impact of man-made improvements of historic and/or cultural significance (e.g., cabins, fences, mining structures, etc.). Another important difference between the VMS and the SMS is that in contrast to the VMS, which specifically identified timeframes for meeting

the objectives (e.g., 1 year to meet the Partial Retention objective), the SMS does not attach timeframes to meeting Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO). Instead, timeframes for meeting SIO are disclosed in the project scenic resources report (i.e., this report) and the project specific NEPA document.

Scenery management direction outlined in the forest plan is discussed below.

## Forest Plan

The FP provides standards and guidelines which pertain to scenic resources in the Homestead project area:

- **FW-DC-AR-02:** The scenic resources of the IPNF complement the recreation settings and experiences while reflecting healthy and sustainable ecosystem conditions.
- **MA4-GDL-AR-01:** Management activities should be consistent with the Scenic Integrity Objective of Very High.
- **MA6-GDL-AR-05:** Management activities should be consistent with the Scenic Integrity Objective of Low to High.

*The IPNF Implementation Guide for Scenery Management: Understanding the how, what, and when of implementation under the 2015 IPNF Forest Plan (DRAFT)* provides further direction on the application of the SMS within the context of the Forest Plan, and includes mapping of necessary SMS components, including CL 1, 2, and 3 viewing platforms and SIOs (mapped at the forestwide scale). This guidebook provides for refining and expanding on forestwide inventory information to ensure the sufficient level of detail necessary in describing both the affected environment and environmental effects.

## Environmental Consequences

### Methodology

Agriculture Handbook No. 701, *Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management*, was used to evaluate the proposed project. The Scenery Management System represents the best available science for achieving high quality scenery as an outcome of National Forest management practices.

Information on the existing condition of scenic resources was collected through office work and during site visits during fall 2018 and summer 2019. Prior to entering the field, forest plan mapping was reviewed to determine the relevant CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms. In addition, project maps were used to identify the potential visibility of the proposed activities and treatments, especially from the CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms. The Forest Plan SIO and Scenic Attractiveness maps (in both digital and hardcopy formats) were consulted to determine relevant direction for the project area.

In the field, the CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms were visited. Photographs were taken from a variety of points along the CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms where project treatment units were assessed to be visible. Photographs of broader portions of the project area were also taken where it was difficult to assess or unknown whether units would be visible. This reconnaissance was used in the office to determine actual seen areas and gauge existing scenic integrity, as well as for use in the analysis phase of the project.

For analysis, field reconnaissance photographs, together with project contour maps, were used to determine visibility of the proposed action. To further assist in determining unit/activity visibility, the analysis also used Google Earth Pro web-based software. Project treatment units and roads were imported into Google Earth Pro (as .kmz files) and draped over the three-dimensional model. Units were then viewed from near ground level and/or “street view” from a variety of locations, including those located at or along the CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms from which photographs had been taken during field reconnaissance. For some highly visible proposed units and roads, these three-dimensional model views created in Google Earth Pro were saved as .jpeg files and placed on actual photographs to create rough photographic simulations (using Adobe Photoshop software) depicting the location and shape of the unit(s) on the landscape. This step provides for a more specific understanding of the visibility of a particular unit, as well as to account for any screening vegetation or landform which is not evident in Google Earth Pro. A limitation of using Google

Earth Pro for determining visibility is that near view screening from adjacent trees cannot be taken into consideration.

Additionally, a review of past projects with similar activities was conducted to more fully understand the effects of various treatment types from a variety of viewing distances, as well as the effects of road construction/reconstruction/maintenance.

Tables were then developed to document effects of treatment by unit and temporary road. Once visibility of proposed treatment units and roads from the CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms was established as described above, determinations were made regarding the effects of visible treatment units, the need for project design features, and if the SIOs would be met under the proposed action.

### *Spatial and Temporal Context for Effects Analysis*

Management activities such as timber harvesting and road construction/reconstruction can effect scenic resources by creating changes in the form, line, color, or texture in a given viewing area. The degree of visual impacts resulting from these actions depends on the interaction of elements in relation to the viewer, such as the surrounding landscape, slope, aspect, and frequency and duration of the view. There are several identified points of interest, routes/roads, trails, rivers, and lakes of concern (identified in the *Draft IPNF Implementation Guide*) that offer views of the project area. The visible effects of proposed activities may result in form, line, color, and texture contrasts with both the existing and desired condition.

For scenic resources, the spatial context of the effects analysis is the project area and includes all areas of harvest, prescribed burning, and other activity units, landings and processing areas (including slash disposal areas), road construction/reconstruction/decommissioning, aquatic habitat improvement, and any other areas where ground-disturbing activities have the potential to impact scenic resources.

With regard to temporal context for direct and indirect effects to scenic resources, short-term refers to the first 5 year period following completion of implementation of timber harvest, slash disposal, regeneration, prescribed burning, and all other activities proposed under this project. This period of time is associated with the greatest impact to scenic resources, including tree removal, road work and other construction activities, and general ground disturbance and change to the existing condition. Long-term refers to the period of time beyond that initial 5 years, and is associated with the recovery of vegetation, both grasses and shrubs, as well as early regeneration of the forest overstory.

For purposes of the cumulative effects analysis, the spatial context is the visible area within which the effects of the proposed action and the identified past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions are, or are expected to be, visible at the same time. The temporal context for the cumulative effects analysis will be the same as the direct and indirect effects analysis.

### *Resource Indicators and Measures*

The resource indicator used to measure effects to scenic resources is Scenic Integrity. Scenic Integrity is measured qualitatively in terms of Scenic Integrity Levels (SILs). SILs range from Low to Very High, and are a description of the “degree of intactness and wholeness of the Landscape Character” (USDA 1995, p. 7), in relation to both the existing and desired scenic integrity. Furthermore, the use of scenic integrity as an indicator of change facilitates comparison with the SIO (identified as guidelines in the Forest Plan) to determine compliance of the project.

Both the existing condition and effects analysis refer to this indicator, and the effects analysis relate this to the forest plan direction for scenic resources.

## **Alternative A: No Action**

By definition, direct and indirect effects (40 CFR 1508.8) and cumulative effects (40 CFR 1508.7) result from the proposed action, and thus are not germane to the No Action Alternative.

Under this alternative, the existing condition would prevail, and current trends may continue, barring a stand-replacing fire or disease incident. The grand fir mixed stands would continue to exhibit a finely

textured forest cover, with a slow but perceptible change as any remaining western white pine, larch, and ponderosa pine are lost. In the foreground viewing distance from the surrounding areas, views would more consistently be of medium-size class as larger trees are killed, with a dense understory of shade-tolerant species that will increasingly reduce visual penetration into the stands.

This situation would result in a “homogenized and simplified” landscape (See Vegetation Report), from a visual standpoint, as contrast and interest associated with color and texture are reduced in all viewing distances. To many forest visitors, the visual appearance of such a landscape has aesthetic appeal.

However, it does not move the project area toward the forest-wide desired condition for scenic resources in which “scenic resources of the IPNF... reflect healthy and sustainable ecosystem conditions” (2015 Forest Plan, p. 34).

## **Alternative B: Proposed Action**

### *Direct and Indirect Effects*

The direct and indirect effects of the proposed action are those related to the specific activities proposed for the project. These effects are measured as appropriate from FP-identified viewing platforms.

### **Timber Harvest, Slash Disposal, and Regeneration Activities**

Alternative B proposes timber harvest using the following four regeneration-type treatments: irregular shelterwood with reserves, shelterwood with reserves, seed tree with reserves, and clearcut with reserves. These treatments are focused on removal of late-seral species (grand fir, Douglas fir, and lodgepole pine), and would result in removal of most of the trees in the units. The clearcut with reserves treatment will result in nearly all of the trees removed, with the exception scattered trees retained to meet objectives such as snag recruitment. The seed tree with reserves treatment retains reserve trees in addition to dispersed overstory trees, approximately 5-10 per acre retained for seed production. The irregular shelterwood with reserves treatment would retain yet more trees, as many as 30 trees per acre. The effect of the clearcut with reserves and seed tree with reserves treatments on scenic resources will be a created opening where the ground is visible through the retained trees. This will result in color, texture, and line contrasts that would be visible from views afforded in foreground, middleground, and background viewing distances.

The effect will be similar with the irregular shelterwood with reserves treatment: effects will range between a created opening with most of the ground visible to a slight texture change where the ground is slightly visible through the retained trees, depending on the number and spatial distribution of the retained trees.

The proposed action also includes commercial thin treatments in several units. The effect of this treatment on scenic resources would be a more open stand in immediate foreground and foreground viewing distances on the level. Individual trees would be evident and the canopy would appear complete with some gaps. In middleground and background viewing distances, a slight change in texture might be evident.

### *Effects Associated with Harvest Operations and Road Activities*

Various types of logging systems would be used based on terrain and access constraints. On steeper terrain, skyline and off-road skyline yarding systems would be used, and tractor yarding would be utilized on flatter ground. In skyline units, reserve trees would be greater in number and denser at the lower elevations of the unit compared to the higher elevations. In tractor units, it is expected that reserve trees would be dispersed more uniformly throughout the unit.

Related to effects of treatment are the effects associated with harvest and construction operations, which are generally perceived negatively by the public (Ryan 2005). Activities include equipment operation, road construction, road reconstruction, temporary road construction, landing construction and use, skid trail construction and use, and slash piling and disposal. The effects of these activities include ground disturbance, stumps, generation of slash, damaged reserve trees.

Ground disturbance resulting from equipment operation for cutting, yarding, skidding, as well as new road construction, landing construction, road reconstruction, and temporary road construction activities can

affect scenery by exposing light colored soils and creating noticeable color contrasts which have the potential to be visible in all viewing distances. Line contrasts may also result and be noticeable in all viewing distances.

In general, actions such as fully recontouring temporary roads and landings, reseeding roads, landings, and slash piles, minimizing cuts and fills associated with permanent and temporary road construction and landings, and screening these effects as seen from CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms by utilizing topography and vegetation screening would all help to reduce impacts.

Woody debris and slash resulting from harvest activities can have some of the greatest impacts on the visual quality of a viewshed following harvest (Ryan 2005). When slash is mechanically piled and then burned, areas where pile burning occurs will be blackened and some unburned or partially burned materials will remain after burning. Visibility of the effects of pile burning are usually limited to the foreground and middleground viewing distances. Disposal of slash piles as soon as possible after they are generated reduces the amount of time they are visible to the public. In addition, when burning slash piles in the viewshed of sensitive corridors, implementation should ensure 95 percent consumption of the piles, even when this may mean re-piling and re-burning. Scattering slash that has not been consumed by burning is also acceptable.

Broadcast burning of slash throughout the unit and burning slash piles would result in additional color and texture contrasts as areas are left blackened by fire. Other visible effects of slash disposal by burning would be tree mortality (standing with red needles), scorched/blackened tree boles, as well as blackened slash material that is not completely consumed during burning activities.

The effects of operations are most noticeable during the first several years following treatment. In the short term, soil disturbance related to operations will be visible depending on location and screening by remaining vegetation. In the long term, it is expected that many of the impacts associated with project operations will have dissipated, as seen in all viewing distances. Groundcover of grasses and some shrubs are expected to have recovered, regeneration is expected to have begun, together screening some stumps and downed woody debris left in the unit. Effects of slash piling and disposal will have also dissipated.

Regeneration activities are proposed for the timber harvest units following burning. This includes planting a mix of western larch and rust-resistant white pine, possible gopher control activities, as well as potential future pruning activities to protect regeneration from white pine blister rust and improve growing conditions. The effects of these activities include slight color and texture contrasts, but are moving the treated areas toward the desired condition for scenic resources.

### ***Treatment Unit Analysis – All Concern Levels***

#### **Clarkia Marble Road – Forest Road 321**

Units 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 5A.4, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 22, 25A, 25B, 26, and 28 will be visible in the immediate foreground and/or foreground viewing distance from this route between the DaVeggio Creek crossing to the north and the Marble Creek crossing to the south.

From this viewing position, the effects of the treatments will be evident as the ground plane becomes more visible and the number of trees is greatly reduced. Visual penetration into the stand will increase significantly. Trees remaining will be larger in size with higher canopies, making the boles of the tree most visible to vehicles passing by these treatment units. The effect of these treatment units will be accentuated by the adjacent untreated areas and design features are incorporated to minimize this effect. These include edge treatments as well as retention of additional trees to break up the opening as seen from the road.

Treatment in these units has the potential to expose existing and new roads as the trees are removed. This will include temporary roads. Design features are included to minimize the visual impact of these roads.

From this route south of the Marble Creek crossing, the effects of other units will be evident. These effects will be greatest from an opening created by past timber harvest on private land south of the Marble Creek crossing. From this viewing position, the effects of treatment in units or portions of units 30, 31A, 31B, 32A, 32B, 33, 34, and 35 will be evident. In particular, the effects in steeper units that face the viewing position will be more obvious, including 31B, 32A, 32B, and 35. Additionally, removal of most of the trees



in these steeper units has the potential to expose existing roads, resulting in increased line contrasts. To minimize this impact, design features intended to provide screening to break up portions of the road so as to remain subordinate to the overall viewshed.

Gold Connector Marble Creek Trail #251 and Marble Divide – Grandfather National Recreation Trail #275

From these routes, the effects will be similar to those described for FR 321 south of the Marble Creek crossing. These effects will be viewed in the background viewing distance which will minimize the impact, but will still require attention to be paid to form and edge treatment as described in the project design features.

Camp 3 Campground, Hobo Cedar Grove, Hobo Creek Splash Dam, Hobo Creek Historic Trail, Donkey Creek Campground, Lookout Mountain Trail #52, Hobo Cedar Grove Big Loop #256, Lines Creek Trail #246, Cornwall Creek Trail #262, Marble Creek Trail #261, and Theriault Lake

From these viewing positions, the effects of the proposed action will not be evident due to topographic and/or vegetative screening.

## **Road System Management**

Under this alternative, new system road construction, temporary road construction, and road reconstruction are proposed. Of all the activities included in the proposed action, road system related activities have the potential to have the greatest impact on scenic resources. This is due to the high potential of road management-related activities to introduce line, color, and texture contrasts into the landscape possibly resulting in effects that may dominate the viewshed both in the short-term and long-term.

In the foreground viewing distance, as seen from both the road itself and the surrounding area, road construction activities result in a cleared area for the roadbed, as well as any necessary cut and fill slopes. Immediately following construction, cut and fill slopes usually do not have any vegetation, and vegetation may take the short-term to grow, and may be sparse depending on site specific factors. In the middleground viewing distance, these same contrasts may be visible, depending on topography, design of the road, and viewer position. Design features to minimize color and line contrasts such as seeding to encourage grass growth and recovery of shrubs would help to minimize visual impacts.

The proposed new road construction would not be visible from the Clarkia Marble Road (FR 321) within the project area or outside of it due to topographic and/or vegetative screening.

Temporary roads will be constructed to access portions of the harvest units. Temporary roads or portions thereof, including U13Temp, U14Temp, U20Temp, U21Temp, U21Temp2, U25Temp, U26Temp, and U28Temp would be visible in the immediate foreground and/or foreground viewing distances from FR 321. These roads will be located to take advantage of topographic screening in views from FR 321 to the extent possible and will be fully recontoured and reseeded once harvest operations are completed.

## ***Cumulative Effects***

The cumulative effects analysis considers how the effects of present and foreseeable future actions, as well as past actions, would combine with the proposed action to affect scenic resources.

A number of past and present actions have occurred or are occurring in the project area and surrounding area that generally have minimal effects to scenic resources including: road decommissioning, road maintenance, trail maintenance, use of motorized vehicles, herbicide spraying, outfitter and guide activities, precommercial thinning, tree planting, white pine pruning, road maintenance, gopher control baiting, outfitter/guide operations, splash dams and stream channelization for log transport, travel plan implementation, public recreational activities (berry picking, hunting, camping, hiking, OHV use, etc.) and public firewood cutting. Effects resulting from these activities are generally localized, and would remain subordinate to the landscape character.

Actions that have occurred in the cumulative effects area (CEA) and that have a greater potential to affect scenery include: fire suppression, road construction, wildfires, timber harvest and associated slash treatments, and prescribed burning.

Road construction has resulted in a limited amount of color and line contrasts visible from the CL 1 viewing platforms, as the effects of this activity is screened from view by topography and/or vegetation. Gravel pit development can have effects on scenery due to the potential color and line contrasts, depending on location and visibility.

Past timber harvest, employing a variety of prescriptions and logging systems, has occurred throughout the surrounding area on National Forest and private lands. Results of these actions are visible in varying degrees from the CL 1 and 2 viewing platforms examined in this analysis. Due in large measure to viewing distance (primarily middleground and background), effects from these actions range from an altered appearance, where contrasts are minimal, to a modified appearance that dominate the viewshed, depending on soils, aspect, vegetative species composition, and state of regeneration, as well as viewing distance.

The effects of slash treatment, such as pile burning and broadcast burning, include color and texture contrasts; however, these usually persist in the short-term only and are not evident on the landscape from the CL 1 viewing platforms. Prescribed burning and fire managed for resource benefit can result in effects to scenery, killing trees in areas varying in size and blackening tree boles and ground vegetation.

Reasonably foreseeable future activities that have the potential for effects to scenic resources include: wildfire, fire suppression, fire managed for resource benefit, and recreational use (including OHV use). Effects from these activities would be similar to those described above.

The combined effects of the proposed action and the effects of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions described above will be noticeable but will not lower the scenic integrity levels of the area when design features are applied.

### *Forest Plan Compliance*

The proposed action would have impacts on the scenic resources of the project area as described in the direct/indirect and cumulative effects sections above.

The effects of the proposed action would meet the Forest Plan scenic integrity objectives in the short term and/or long term. Effects of the proposed timber harvest activities will result in a Scenic Integrity Level (SIL) of Low in the short term and the SIL of High in the long term as seen from Forest Road 321 and Forest Trails #251 and #275 with the prescribed project design features applied. This will meet or exceed the Forest Plan Scenic Integrity Objectives of Moderate and High.

Effects of the proposed road system management activities would meet the applicable SIO of High, Moderate, or Low as seen from FR 321 and Forest Trails #251 and #275 with the prescribed project design features applied.

All other activities included under the proposed action will meet the SIOs identified in the Forest Plan.

## **Design Features – Scenic Resources**

- Treatment unit boundaries would resemble the shape of natural openings in the surrounding area, would not be symmetrical in shape, avoid right angles and straight lines, and follow natural topographic breaks and changes in vegetation.
- Locate temporary roads U13Temp, U14Temp, U20Temp, U21Temp, U21Temp2, U25Temp, U26Temp, and U28Temp so as to take advantage of topographic and vegetation screening as feasible. These temporary roads will be fully recontoured and reseeded once operations are completed.
- Dispose of slash piles as soon as possible after they are generated. Where slash piles are visible in the foreground of Forest Road 321, ensure 95 percent consumption of the piles, even when this may mean re-piling and re-burning. Scattering slash that has not be consumed by burning is also acceptable.
- Minimize cuts and fills associated with road and landing construction, and recontour and reseed temporary roads, landings, and slash piles when harvest activities are completed.

- Units 30, 31B, 32A, 32B, 33, 34, and 35: Break up the created openings resulting from treatment in these units using groups of leave trees to provide vertical structure within the harvest area and break up the opening. These would be both live and dead trees emulating the same structure that would remain after a natural mixed-severity wildfire. These leave trees would have an irregular or uneven distribution and can range from individual trees to groups of trees up to 3 acres in size and may also include leave areas adjacent to unit boundaries.
- Units 30, 31B, 32B, 34, and 35: Retain adequate trees to minimize the visibility of the existing roads within these units as seen from Forest Road 321 south of the project area.
- Units 1A, 2A, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 25A, 25B, 26, and 28: Use marking methods (such as  $\frac{3}{4}$  banding and reduced line lengths on boundary trees) designed to minimize the visibility of leave tree and boundary marking paint following project completion as seen from FR 321.
- Units 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 5A.4, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 22, 25A, 25B, 26, and 28: Retain trees along FR 321 to break up views into these units. This can be accomplished through concentrating some of the reserves near the road frontage. It may also require additional trees or groups of trees to provide a natural-appearing partial screen as seen from the road.
- Feather all unit boundaries visible from FR 321 in immediate foreground, foreground, middleground viewing distances.
- Units 1A, 2A, 12, 13, 14, 20, 21, 25A, 25B, 26, and 28: Use marking methods (such as  $\frac{3}{4}$  banding and reduced line lengths on boundary trees) designed to minimize the visibility of leave tree and boundary marking paint following project completion as seen from FR 321.

## References

Ryan, Robert L. 2005. *Social science to improve fuels management: a synthesis of research on aesthetics and fuels management*. Gen. Tech. Rep. NC-261. St. Paul, MN: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, North Central Research Station. 58 p.

USDA Forest Service. 1995. Agriculture Handbook #701, *Landscape Aesthetics: A Handbook for Scenery Management*. <http://naldr.nal.usda.gov/>.

USDA Forest Service. 1997. *Integration of Forest Planning Into Ecosystem Management: Toward a Forest Ecosystem Approach: An Assessment for the St. Joe Area*. St. Joe Ranger District, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, St. Maries, ID. 120 p.

USDA Forest Service Northern Region. 2011. *Northern Region Scenic Resource Mitigation Menu & Design Considerations for Vegetation Treatments*.

USDA Forest Service Idaho Panhandle National Forest. 2016. *The IPNF Implementation Guide for Scenery Management: Understanding the how, what, and when of implementation under the 2015 IPNF Forest Plan (DRAFT)*.